

# Worksession

<b>Agenda Item #</b>	7
<b>Meeting Date</b>	September 7, 2004
<b>Prepared By</b>	Suzanne Ludlow, Community & Government Liaison
<b>Approved By</b>	Barbara B. Matthews City Manager

<b>Discussion Item</b>	Status of Purple Line (or Bi-County Transitway)
<b>Background</b>	<p>A light rail or bus rapid transit (BRT) line is being studied to connect Bethesda, Silver Spring, Takoma/Langley, College Park and New Carrollton. Planners from both the State of Maryland and Montgomery County are studying the details of possible routes for this line.</p> <p>The Montgomery County Council has asked County planners to do technical research, meet with the public, and report back to them in order to be prepared to participate effectively in the State study and keep work on the Purple Line (the term the Montgomery County Council prefers) moving forward. The State's Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is also studying options for the Bi-County Transitway (the term they prefer) and is planning to hold public meetings in October and November on route alternatives. Montgomery County is focusing on light rail vehicles (although the County Executive continues to express interest in expansion of the Metro-style heavy rail system). MTA is studying both light rail and bus rapid transit options.</p> <p>Alex Hekimian and Margaret Rifkin are the Montgomery County Park and Planning staff coordinating the study of route options through Montgomery County, per the County Council request. In doing their research, they have met with City of Takoma Park and Prince George's County staff to discuss pros and cons of route options and station locations. In looking at possible ways to get from the Silver Spring Transit Station to a proposed Long Branch station, they have focused on two main route options:</p> <p><b>Sligo Avenue:</b> From the Silver Spring Transit Station, east on Sligo Avenue (with a possible station near Chesapeake Avenue), north on Piney Branch Road to a Long Branch station near Flower Avenue.</p> <p><b>Wayne Avenue:</b> From the Silver Spring Transit Station, northeast on Wayne Avenue, across Sligo Creek to a possible Wayne Avenue station, underground to Arliss Street to a Long Branch station.</p> <p>Either route would then continue on Piney Branch Road to a possible Piney Branch/University station, would head east on University to a possible Carroll Avenue/University station, and would continue on University to a Takoma/Langley Crossroad station.</p> <p>The City Council has adopted three resolutions regarding the routing of the Purple Line/Bi-County Transitway (Resolutions 2000-38, 2003-4, and 2003-53). The Council supported the Sligo Avenue route in its first resolution, and continued to</p>

	<p>support a “University Boulevard/Piney Branch Route” in its most recent resolution. If the City Council wishes to restate its position on a preferable route or on possible stations, it should do so before the Montgomery County Planning Board’s public hearing on September 30. The County Council Transportation and Environment Committee will discuss the matter on October 4 and the full Council will consider the staff recommendations on October 5.</p> <p>As City staff discussed the options with Park and Planning staff, the Wayne Avenue route began to look like the preferable route for both technical and ridership reasons. Sligo Avenue and Piney Branch Road south of Sligo Creek Parkway are relatively narrow and the hills on Piney Branch would be a challenge. Cost makes a completely underground system (even with cut and cover technique for most of the underground portion) along these routes unlikely. Even with an underground route, it is likely that Sligo Avenue properties would need to be taken and there would be a negative impact on the neighborhood.</p> <p>The Wayne Avenue route could be at grade until it crosses Manchester. With a station for that densely-populated neighborhood and a tunnel to Arliss Street, the ridership, lesser costs and lesser neighborhood impacts make the Wayne Avenue route look more likely to be successful.</p> <p>The technical information for these routes is still in the early stages. However, it is important to ensure that alternatives that the local community prefers are part of the list of alternatives the State takes to a more-detailed level of study.</p>
<b>Policy</b>	The Council takes positions on plans that impact the City of Takoma Park.
<b>Fiscal Impact</b>	Although costly to build, a well-planned transit system with stations in appropriate locations are critical to the livability and economic health of the local area.
<b>Attachments</b>	Council resolutions; information from Park and Planning and the Maryland Transit Administration.
<b>Recommendation</b>	Give direction to staff on route and station preferences for revised Council resolution to be considered on September 27.
<b>Special Consideration</b>	

Introduced By: Councilmember Elrich

**Resolution No. 2000-38**

**Resolution on Possible Light Rail Routes Through or Near Takoma Park**

- WHEREAS, since the early 1990's the Maryland Department of Transportation has been studying ways to reduce traffic congestion on the Capital Beltway; AND
- WHEREAS, as the investigation has proceeded, possible routes for light rail transit lines have been identified that roughly parallel the Beltway through Maryland; AND
- WHEREAS, "Corridor P6" is a possible light rail route that passes through or near the City of Takoma Park in connecting the Woodrow Wilson Bridge with the American Legion Bridge, and on that route would connect College Park, Silver Spring and Bethesda; AND
- WHEREAS, in investigating the feasibility of the P6 line, the consultant firm Parsons Brinckerhoff has twice prepared reports for the Maryland State Highway Administration and the Maryland Mass Transit Administration on options for the route in the Takoma Park area; AND
- WHEREAS, those reports are the "*Inner Loop*" *Transitway Assessment* of April, 1997 and the *Capital Beltway Corridor Transportation Study, Light Rail Transit Route Alignment Alternatives, Langley Park to Silver Spring* of February 25, 2000; AND
- WHEREAS, a field trip was sponsored by the Maryland Mass Transit Administration in April, 2000 to examine six of the alternative route options identified in the Parsons Brinckerhoff reports and was attended by transportation, community and park planners from a number of government agencies, including City staff; AND
- WHEREAS, field trip participants agreed with the conclusion of Parsons Brinckerhoff in its second report that three of the routes do not warrant further analysis due to negative community impact and difficult topography; AND
- WHEREAS, City staff briefed the City Council on May 30, 2000 on the six route options examined on the field trip; AND
- WHEREAS, the City Council held a public forum on July 3, 2000 on the options to receive public comment; AND
- WHEREAS, the Maryland Mass Transit Administration wishes to receive comments on the route options from the City of Takoma Park as it decides how to proceed in its

investigation of the P6 option; AND

WHEREAS, the City Council strongly supports mass transit and other efforts to minimize use of the automobile in, through and near Takoma Park; AND

WHEREAS, comments received on the six options are as follows:

**Piney Branch Road Route** - from the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, along University to Piney Branch Road, down Piney Branch Road to Sligo Avenue and/or Thayer Avenue

***Comments:** The City Council believes that the Piney Branch Road Route is the most desirable of the possible routes in this area due to the potential ridership and economic development benefits. University Boulevard is an appropriate location for a light rail route given its use and right-of-way width. A portion of University Boulevard forms a boundary of the City of Takoma Park. Parts of Piney Branch Road also form the border of the City of Takoma Park, and, given that the width of its right-of-way is much narrower than that of University Boulevard, careful evaluation of design and impact alternatives of light rail on Piney Branch will need to be done jointly by Takoma Park and the adjacent Silver Spring neighborhoods. High residential density and the existence of several locations of commercial development on Piney Branch support increased transit development on this route. Stops at Piney Branch and University, and Piney Branch and Flower Avenue could take advantage of high residential density in those areas as well as spur economic revitalization at those intersection. While the City Council defers to the affected Silver Spring neighborhoods on the route between Piney Branch Road and the Silver Spring Metro Station, there are advantages to having a stop close to Sligo Avenue and Fenton Street for access to Montgomery College. There has been some suggestion of a below-ground line between Piney Branch and the west side of Georgia Avenue to minimize neighborhood impact and that option should be investigated. Alignment with the Georgetown Branch line is easiest by approaching the Silver Spring Metro Station from the south, as this route would.*

**Franklin Avenue Route** - from the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, along University to E. Wayne Avenue, then along Long Branch Parkway to Franklin Avenue, along Franklin and Colesville Road to the Silver Spring Metro Station

***Comments:** University Boulevard is an appropriate location for a light rail route given its use and right-of-way width. Discussions as to configuration of light rail on University in this area would need to involve Takoma Park and adjacent unincorporated areas in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. While the City Council defers to the affected Silver Spring neighborhoods regarding the remainder of this route, the option to route the line through Long Branch Park rather than continue on University to Franklin seems unacceptably disruptive to*

*parkland. In addition, transit ridership levels on the Franklin Avenue Route would be lower than other routes due to the low residential density of the area. The grade and angle of the line as it approaches the Silver Spring Metro Station would be a very difficult connection to the Georgetown Branch line to Bethesda.*

**Wayne Avenue Route** - from the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, along University to E. Wayne Avenue, across Long Branch stream and continuing down Wayne Avenue to the Silver Spring Metro Station

***Comments:** University Boulevard is an appropriate location for a light rail route. While the City Council defers to the affected Silver Spring neighborhoods regarding this route, the option to route the line down Wayne Avenue may have some merit given the level of residential density along segments of this route, the planned Wayne Avenue “Green Trail” bikeway, and the new Silver Spring developments now under construction. However, the installation across Long Branch Park would be disruptive to parkland and the adjacent lower-density neighborhoods. The grade and angle of the line as it approaches the Silver Spring Metro Station would be a difficult connection to the Georgetown Branch line, but possibly not as difficult as the Colesville Road approach.*

**Houston Avenue/Sussex Road Route** - from the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, along University to Merrimac, cutting across the Takoma Academy property and along Houston Avenue, Sussex Road and Sligo Avenue to west of Georgia, and on to the Silver Spring Metro Station

***Comments:** This route is not appropriate as an at-grade light rail transit route. Significant negative impacts to the community would occur, with loss of apartment buildings and single family homes in Takoma Park and Silver Spring alike. Parkland would also be negatively impacted. Neither the right of way widths nor the topography could accommodate light rail installation. The City Council agrees with Parsons Brinckerhoff that this route does not warrant further analysis.*

**Jackson/Ethan Allen/Philadelphia Route** - from the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, down the three segments of Jackson Avenue, down Ethan Allen and Philadelphia Avenues to the rail lines and north to the Silver Spring Metro Station

***Comments:** This route is not appropriate as a light rail transit route. Significant negative impacts to the community would occur, with loss of single family homes and historic residential and commercial properties. Parkland would also be negatively impacted. Neither the right of way widths nor the topography could accommodate light rail installation. The City Council agrees with Parsons Brinckerhoff that this route does not warrant further analysis.*

**Sligo Creek Route** - from the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and

University Boulevard, down New Hampshire Avenue to Sligo Creek, along Sligo Creek to Mississippi Avenue, along Mississippi to Sligo Avenue, to the rail lines and north to the Silver Spring Metro Station

*Comments: This route is not appropriate as a light rail transit route. Significant negative impacts to the community would occur, with significant negative impacts to parkland, as well as loss of single family homes. Right of way widths could not accommodate light rail installation. The City Council agrees with Parsons Brinckerhoff that this route does not warrant further analysis; AND*

WHEREAS, the City Council realizes that there is a great deal of additional information that must be gathered and studied regarding the need for, cost of and impacts of a light rail route through or near the City of Takoma Park; AND

WHEREAS, the City Council supports the efforts of the Maryland Department of Transportation to consider light rail routes as an alternative to further road expansion to address traffic congestion.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND THAT the City Council hereby:**

**1) supports the Piney Branch Route as the preferred route for a light rail alignment between the University Boulevard/New Hampshire Avenue intersection to the Silver Spring Metro Station, due to both the high residential density and the potential for economic development at sites in Takoma Park and Silver Spring;**

**2) strongly urges that the Houston Avenue/Sussex Road Route, the Jackson/Ethan Allen/Philadelphia Route, and the Sligo Creek Route be removed from further consideration as possible light rail routes; and**

**3) requests that the Maryland Mass Transit Administration and Maryland State Highway Administration work with the City of Takoma Park community and staff and adjacent Silver Spring neighborhood organizations to further investigate the advantages and disadvantages of the other light rail routes proposed for the area, and to investigate the various types of light rail systems or other transit systems that may be most suitable for our community.**

**ADOPTED THIS 10<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF JULY, 2000.**

**Introduced By: Councilmember Elrich**

**RESOLUTION #2003-4**

**Resolution Supporting the Inclusion of the Inner Purple Line  
In the 2003 Federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill**

- WHEREAS, the Consolidated Transportation Program of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) includes \$18.8 million to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Inner Purple Line, a 14-mile light rail line from Bethesda to New Carrollton with stops to include Chevy Chase, Silver Spring, Takoma-Langley, the University of Maryland, College Park, and Riverdale Park; and MDOT will complete a Supplemental Draft EIS for the Bethesda to Silver Spring portion during 2003; and
- WHEREAS, the Inner Purple Line will promote the revitalization of the business and residential communities through which it passes, will help address traffic congestion in many of the most densely populated communities in Maryland, and will provide much improved access for lower-income residents, college students and others who have few alternative forms of transportation; and
- WHEREAS, the Bethesda to Silver Spring portion of the Inner Purple Line has been studied and adopted as part of Montgomery County's Master Plan, and the Takoma-Langley to New Carrollton segment is consistent with the new Prince George's County General Plan, and the plans and revitalization efforts of the jurisdictions through which it would pass, including Takoma Park; and
- WHEREAS, the Inner Purple Line would provide a critical rail connection of Prince George's and Montgomery Counties; and
- WHEREAS, the Inner Purple Line from Bethesda to New Carrollton, and especially the Bethesda-Silver Spring portion, is the only version of the Purple Line that has been sufficiently studied to be eligible for earmarking in the next Federal transit funding authorization, which is due to be approved by Congress in late 2003; and
- WHEREAS, the cost of the Bethesda to New Carrollton line is \$1.4 billion (Year 2003 dollars), and so its cost and cost effectiveness can compete successfully against other new rail starts for Federal funding; and
- WHEREAS, the Inner Purple Line must be included in the surface transportation reauthorization bill to receive the necessary Federal appropriations; and
- WHEREAS, it is unlikely that the Inner Purple Line would be included in the reauthorization bill without support by the Governor of Maryland, with such support needed by

the end of February, 2003; and

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park City Council has previously supported the Inner Purple Line, through Resolution 2000-38, due to its importance to the economic and transportation needs of the Takoma Park, Long Branch and Takoma-Langley residents and businesses,

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Takoma Park City Council strongly urges Governor Robert Ehrlich to support the inclusion of the Inner Purple line in the 2003 Federal surface transportation reauthorization bill and expresses its strong support for the Inner Purple Line as a light rail line running from Bethesda to Silver Spring along the Master Plan Route, and continuing to New Carrollton.**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City of Takoma Park will join and support the Coalition to Build the Inner Purple Line.**

**ADOPTED THIS 21<sup>st</sup> DAY OF JANUARY, 2003.**

**ATTEST:**

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Catherine E. Waters, CMC/AAE  
City Clerk



**Introduced By: Councilmember Elrich**

**RESOLUTION #2003-53**

**Resolution Providing Comments for the Scoping Phase  
Of the Bi-County Transitway Planning Project**

- WHEREAS, the City of Takoma Park has consistently requested and supported increases in mass transit services to the Takoma Park community; and
- WHEREAS, if properly designed, the Bi-County Transitway will promote the revitalization of the business and residential communities through which it passes, will help address traffic congestion in many of the most densely populated communities in Maryland, and will provide much improved access for lower-income residents, college students and others who have few alternative forms of transportation; and
- WHEREAS, the Maryland Transit Administration is now in the scoping phase of the Bi-County Transitway planning project and is requesting public comment on alternative routes and types of transit vehicles to be used in serving communities from Bethesda to New Carrollton; and
- WHEREAS, if properly routed, the Bi-County Transitway would provide a critical rail connection for Prince George's County and Montgomery County communities, and of the Red, Green and Orange lines of the Metrorail system; and
- WHEREAS, the Georgetown Branch route of the Bethesda to Silver Spring portion of the Bi-County Transitway has been studied and adopted as part of Montgomery County's Master Plan, and the route of the formerly proposed Inner Purple Line from Takoma-Langley to New Carrollton is consistent with the Prince George's County General Plan, as well as the plans and revitalization efforts of the jurisdictions through which it would pass, including Takoma Park; and
- WHEREAS, alternative route proposals suggested by the Maryland Transit Administration staff for the Takoma Park area include a route that could go from College Park west along University Boulevard, south on Piney Branch and west to the Silver Spring Metro Station; a route that could go from College Park west along University Boulevard to New Hampshire Avenue and then directly west to the Silver Spring Metro Station; and a route that could go from Prince George's Plaza west along Route 410 (East-West Highway/Ethan Allen Avenue/Philadelphia Avenue) to the Silver Spring Metro Station; and
- WHEREAS, such routes could be at-grade, below the surface, or a mixture of the two, and, when at-grade could be either on dedicated right-of-way or sharing traffic lanes, or a mixture of the two; and

WHEREAS, the Bi-County Transitway could operate with either a light rail system or bus rapid transit; and

WHEREAS, Takoma Park is a densely-built community with few wide roads, increasingly severe traffic congestion, many hills, many trees, two stream valley parks and a large historic district; and

WHEREAS, routes through Takoma Park must take these constraints into account in order to retain a livable, thriving community while preserving attractive travel times for transit riders; and

WHEREAS, the Takoma/Langley and Long Branch commercial districts are in need of revitalization and are areas of high numbers of transit riders so could strongly benefit from well-designed permanent transit stations near the intersections of University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue and Piney Branch Road and Flower Avenue; and

WHEREAS, given the needs and constraints of the Takoma Park area, the City Council offers the following comments on the three alternative routes currently under study:

- 1) The University Boulevard/Piney Branch Route would serve large numbers of riders, allow for the redevelopment of commercial areas at stops in Takoma/Langley and Long Branch, and provide the greatest amount of flexibility in at-grade or cut-and-cover tunneling for either light rail or bus rapid transit.
- 2) The University Boulevard and Directly West Route would also serve large numbers of riders and allow for the redevelopment of commercial areas in Takoma/Langley and Long Branch, but would likely require more expensive deep tunneling to avoid severe community and environmental impacts while crossing through Takoma Park and Silver Spring neighborhoods.
- 3) The Route 410 Route would not serve as many transit riders as the first two routes, would not connect with the University of Maryland, and would not connect commercial areas in need of redevelopment. Due to topography, historic resources, narrow roadways, and heavy traffic congestion, the only way to construct this route without significant community and environmental damage would be via deep tunneling. Given the cost of such construction with little economic benefit, this option should not be pursued.

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park City Council has previously supported a bi-county transit system, through Resolutions 2000-38 and 2003-4, due to its importance to the economic and transportation needs of the Takoma Park, Long Branch and Takoma-Langley residents and businesses,

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Takoma Park City Council strongly urges the Maryland Transit Administration to:**

- 1. Continue to pursue the Bi-County Transitway to provide badly needed transit services and redevelopment for the Takoma Park community and the other communities in Prince George's County and Montgomery County along the route.**
- 2. Eliminate the Route 410 alternative through Takoma Park from further consideration for the Bi-County Transitway.**
- 3. Support light rail along the grade separated route formerly identified as the Inner Purple Line that was to have run between Silver Spring and College Park along Piney Branch Road and University Boulevard. Such a route should be constructed in a manner that if it begins as bus rapid transit it can be converted to light rail should that option later become available.**
- 4. Include attractive, well-designed permanent transit stations in the Takoma/Langley and Long Branch areas to serve area residents and assist in revitalization efforts.**

**ADOPTED THIS 27<sup>th</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER, 2003.**

**ATTEST:**

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**Catherine E. Waters, CMC/AAE  
City Clerk**